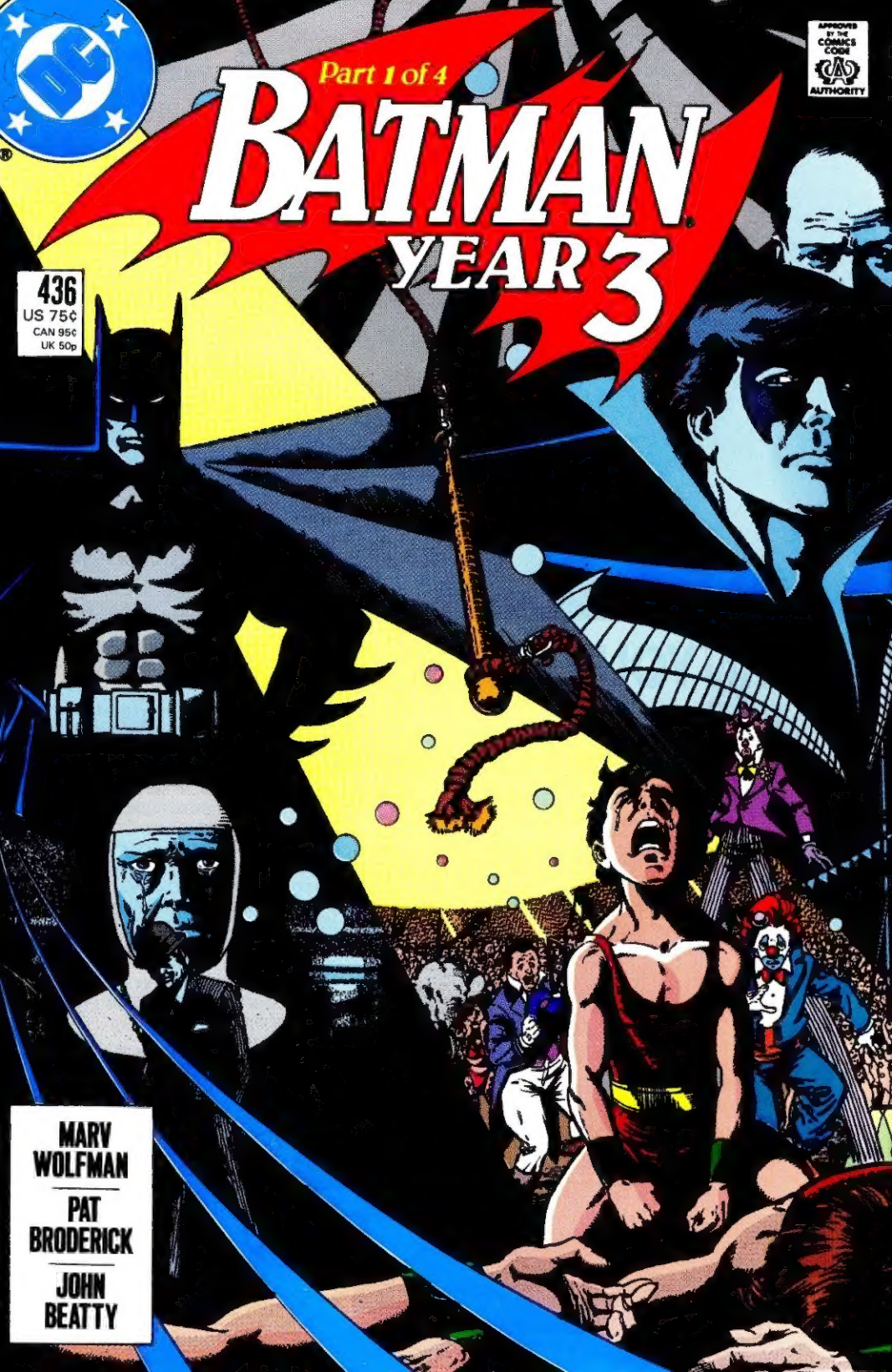
Part 1 of 4
BATMAN
YEAR 3
436
US 75¢
CAN 95¢
UK 50p
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
MARV WOLFMAN
PAT BRODERICK
JOHN BEATTY

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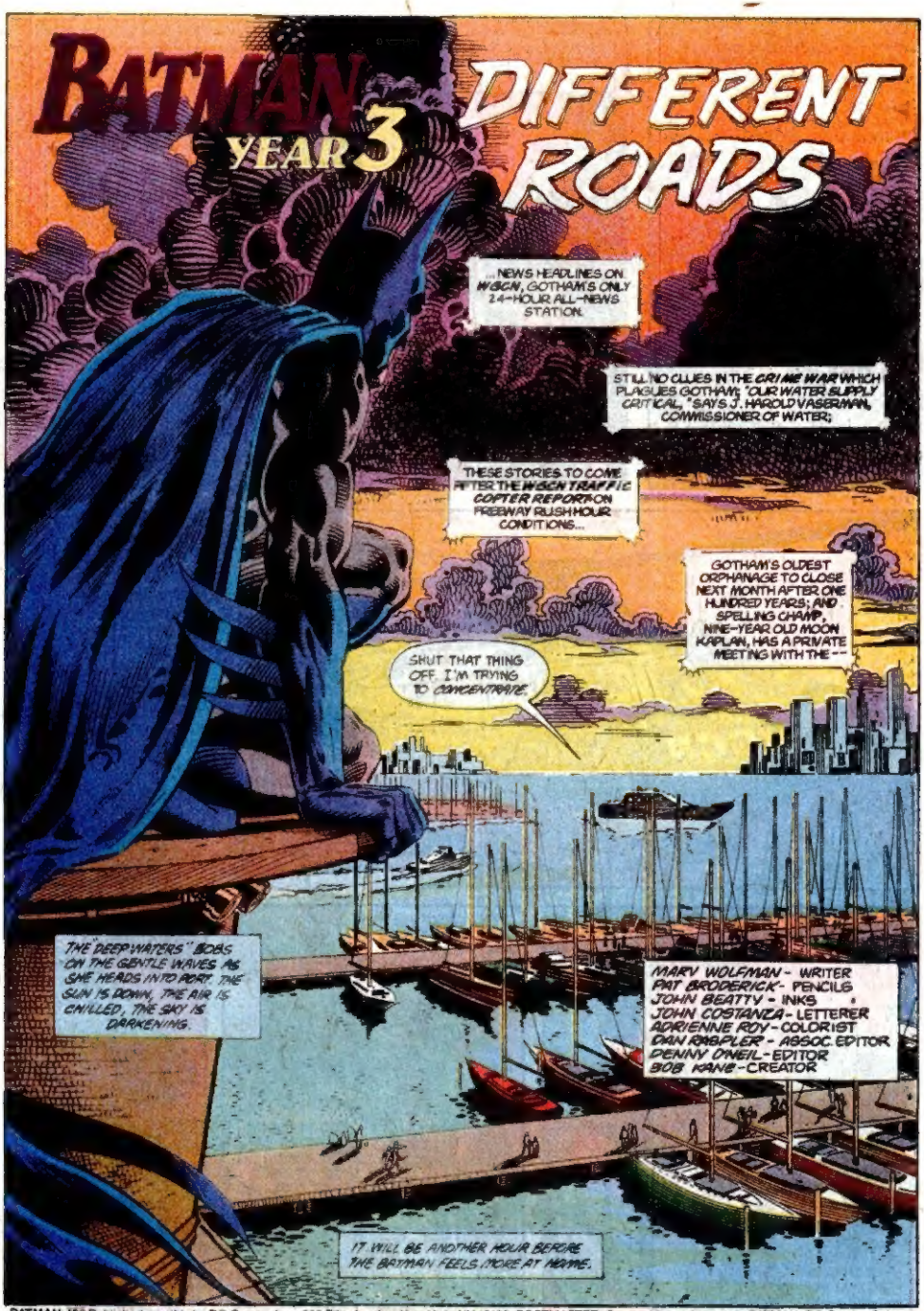
BATMAN YEAR 3
DIFFERENT ROADS
...NEWS HEADLINES ON WGCN, GOTHAM'S ONLY 24-HOUR ALL-NEWS STATION.
STILL NO CLUES IN THE CRIME WAVE WHICH PLAGUES GOTHAM; "OUR WATER SUPPLY CRITICAL," SAYS J. HAROLD VASERMAN, COMMISSIONER OF WATER;
THESE STORIES TO COME AFTER THE WGCN TRAFFIC COPTER REPORT ON FREEWAY RUSH HOUR CONDITIONS...
GOTHAM'S OLDEST ORPHANAGE TO CLOSE NEXT MONTH AFTER ONE HUNDRED YEARS; AND SPELLING CHAMP, NINE-YEAR OLD MOON KAPLAN, HAS A PRIVATE MEETING WITH THE --
SHUT THAT THING OFF. I'M TRYING TO CONCENTRATE
"THE DEEP WATERS" BOBS ON THE GENTLE WAVES AS SHE HEADS INTO PORT. THE SUN IS DOWN, THE AIR IS CHILLED, THE SKY IS DARKENING.
MARV WOLFMAN - WRITER
PAT BRODERICK - PENCILS
JOHN BEATTY - INKS
JOHN COSTANZA - LETTERER
ADRIENNE ROY - COLORIST
DAN KRAFLER - ASSOC. EDITOR
DENNY O'NEIL - EDITOR
BOB KANE - CREATOR
IT WILL BE ANOTHER HOUR BEFORE THE BATMAN FEELS MORE AT HOME.

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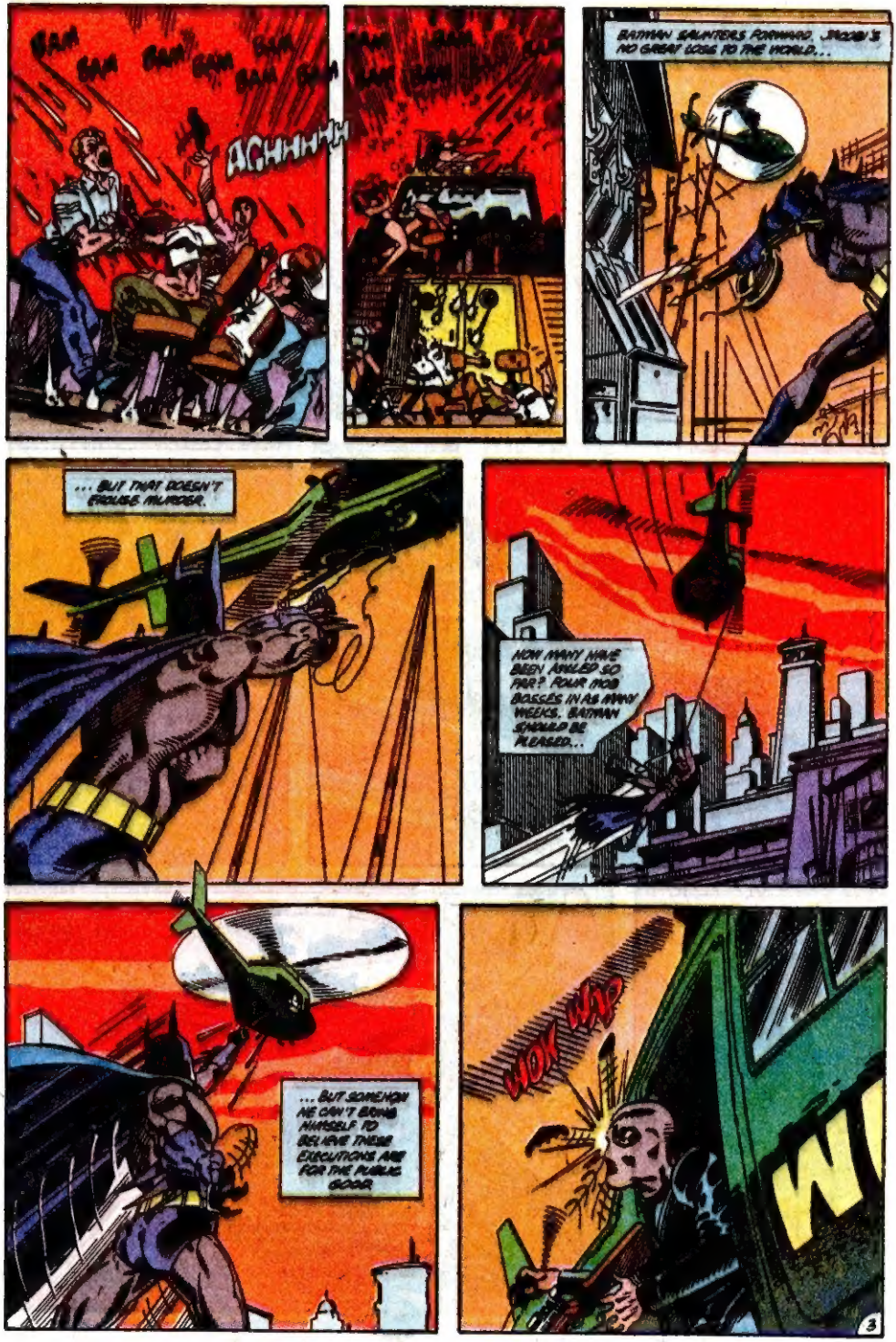
DC Comics Inc. A Warner Communications Company

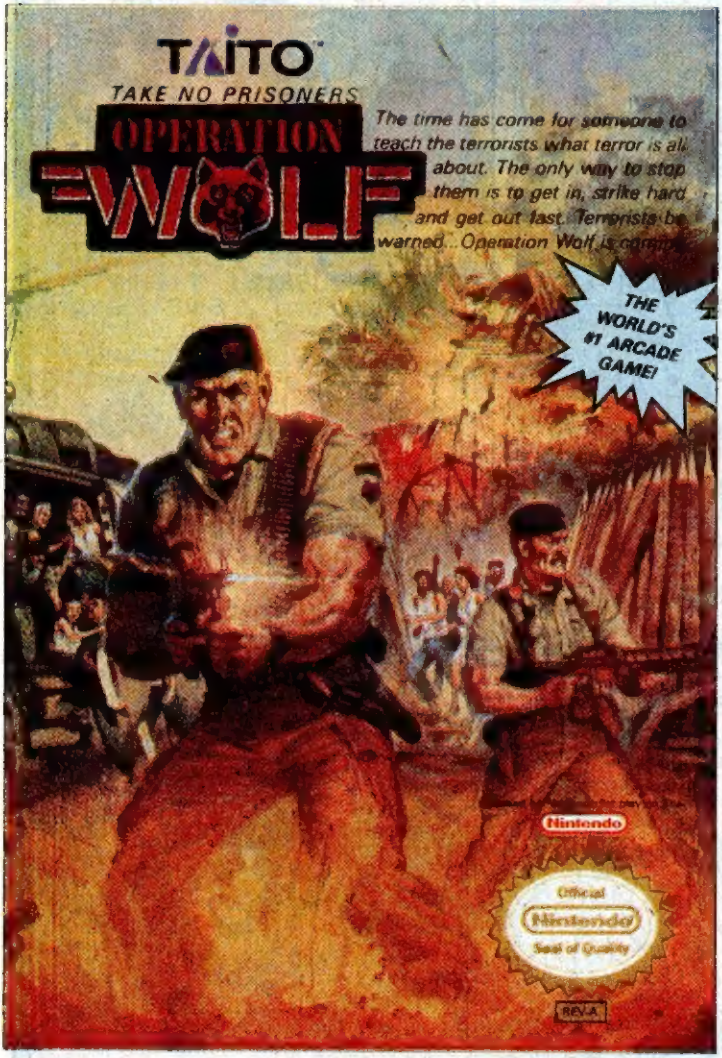
SERRENTINO, CHAN AND NOW MEYERS ARE DEAD -- KILLED. THREE BOSSES IN THREE WEEKS.
THAT OPENS UP LITTLE ITALY, CHINA-TOWN AND THE FASHION DISTRICT TO POSSIBLE TAKEOVER.
POTENTIAL GOOD NEWS. SO WHY DO MY NECK HAIRS ITCH?
"BECAUSE I DON'T KNOW WHO'S BEHIND THE HITS. I DON'T KNOW WHY.
"AND UNLESS OTHER FAMILIES ARE LYING THROUGH THEIR TEETH, NOBODY DOES."
HE FEELS ITS HAND PRESSING AGAINST HIS CHEST BEFORE HE HEARS THE BLADES.
WGCN
BATMAN GLANCES UP AT THE WISDOM TRAFFIC COPTER. IT'S 6:42. RIGHT NOW IT SHOULD BE OVER THE 101 FREEWAY.
BENSON SHORE TO HIM THERE'D BE A HIT ON JACOBI TONIGHT. FOR ONCE HIS INFORMATION WAS CORRECT. BATMAN MOVES.
JAKE, WE GOT PEEPING TOMS. YOU WANT ME TO GIVE 'EM A JAVOLL?
THEY'RE MAKING TOO DAMN MUCH NOISE. ERNIE, SHOO 'EM OUT OF HERE.
BAM BAM BAM BAM
2


BAM BAM BAM BAM BAM BAM BAM
AGHHHH
BAM BAM BAM
BATMAN SAUNTERS FORWARD. JACOB'S NO GREAT LOSS TO THE WORLD...
...BUT THAT DOESN'T TROUBLE MIRROR.
HOW MANY HAVE BEEN KILLED SO FAR? FOUR MOB BOSSES IN AS MANY WEEKS. BATMAN SHOULD BE PLEASED...
...BUT SOMEHOW HE CAN'T BRING HIMSELF TO BELIEVE THESE EXECUTIONS ARE FOR THE PUBLIC GOOD.
WOK WAP
3

HOLD TIGHT, BATMAN--
--THE ROUGH RIDE'S JUST BEGINNING!

TAKE NO PRISONERS.

OPERATION WOLF® FOR YOUR NINTENDO ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEM®


TAITO
TAKE NO PRISONERS
OPERATION WOLF
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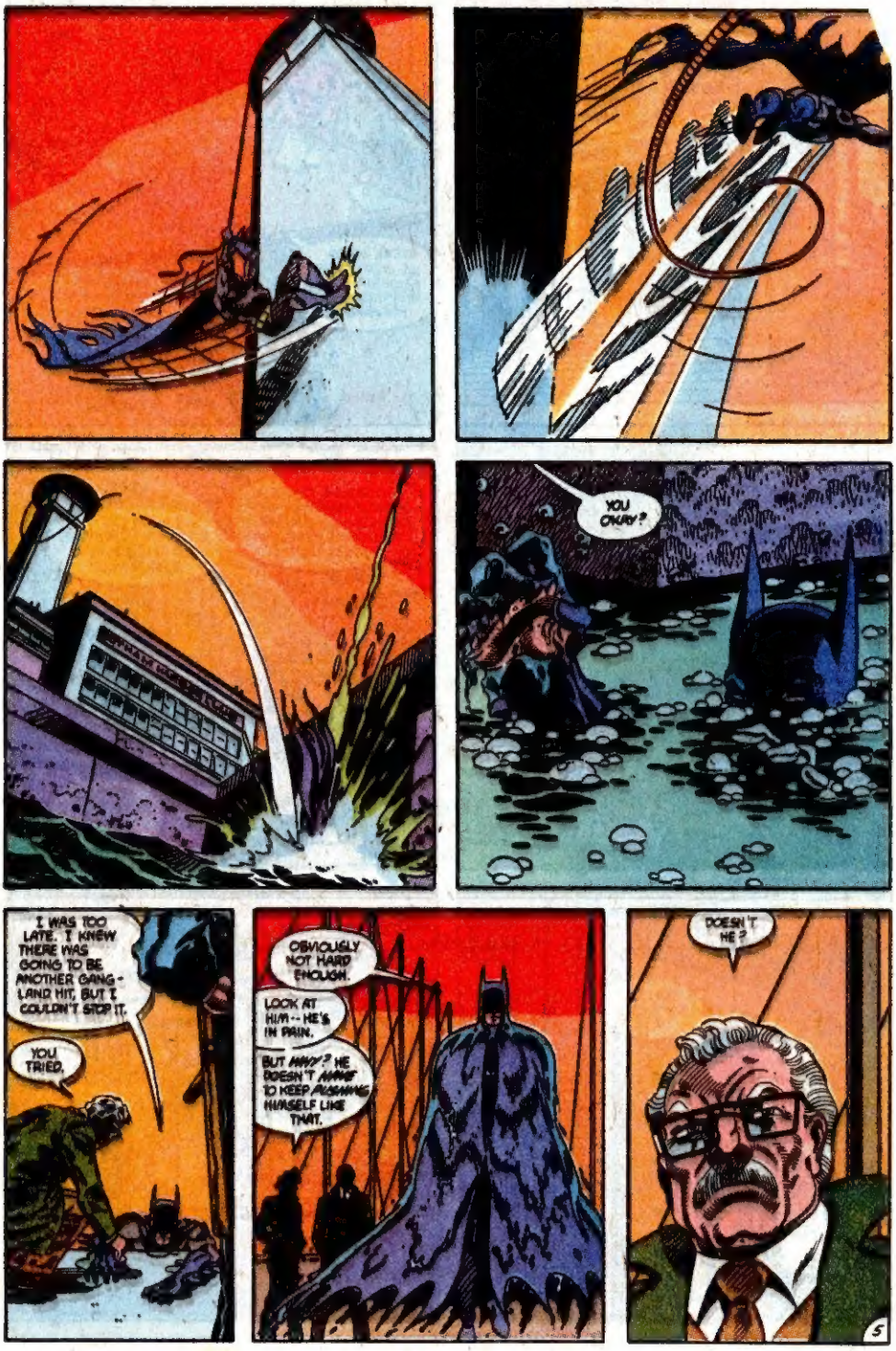

YOU OKAY?
I WAS TOO LATE. I KNEW THERE WAS GOING TO BE ANOTHER GANG-LAND HIT, BUT I COULDN'T STOP IT.
YOU TRIED.
OBVIOUSLY NOT HARD ENOUGH.
LOOK AT HIM -- HE'S IN PAIN.
BUT WHY? HE DOESN'T HAVE TO KEEP PUNISHING HIMSELF LIKE THAT.
DOESN'T HE?
5

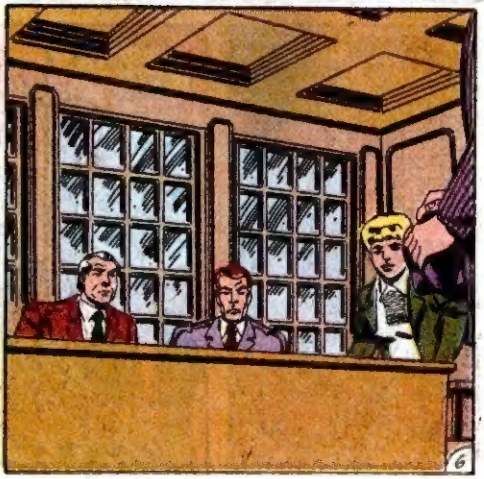
GOTHAM MUNICIPAL COURT HOUSE
...I'M SORRY, GENTLEMEN, BUT I DON'T SEE ANY REASON HE SHOULD BE ALLOWED TO ADDRESS US AGAIN THIS YEAR.

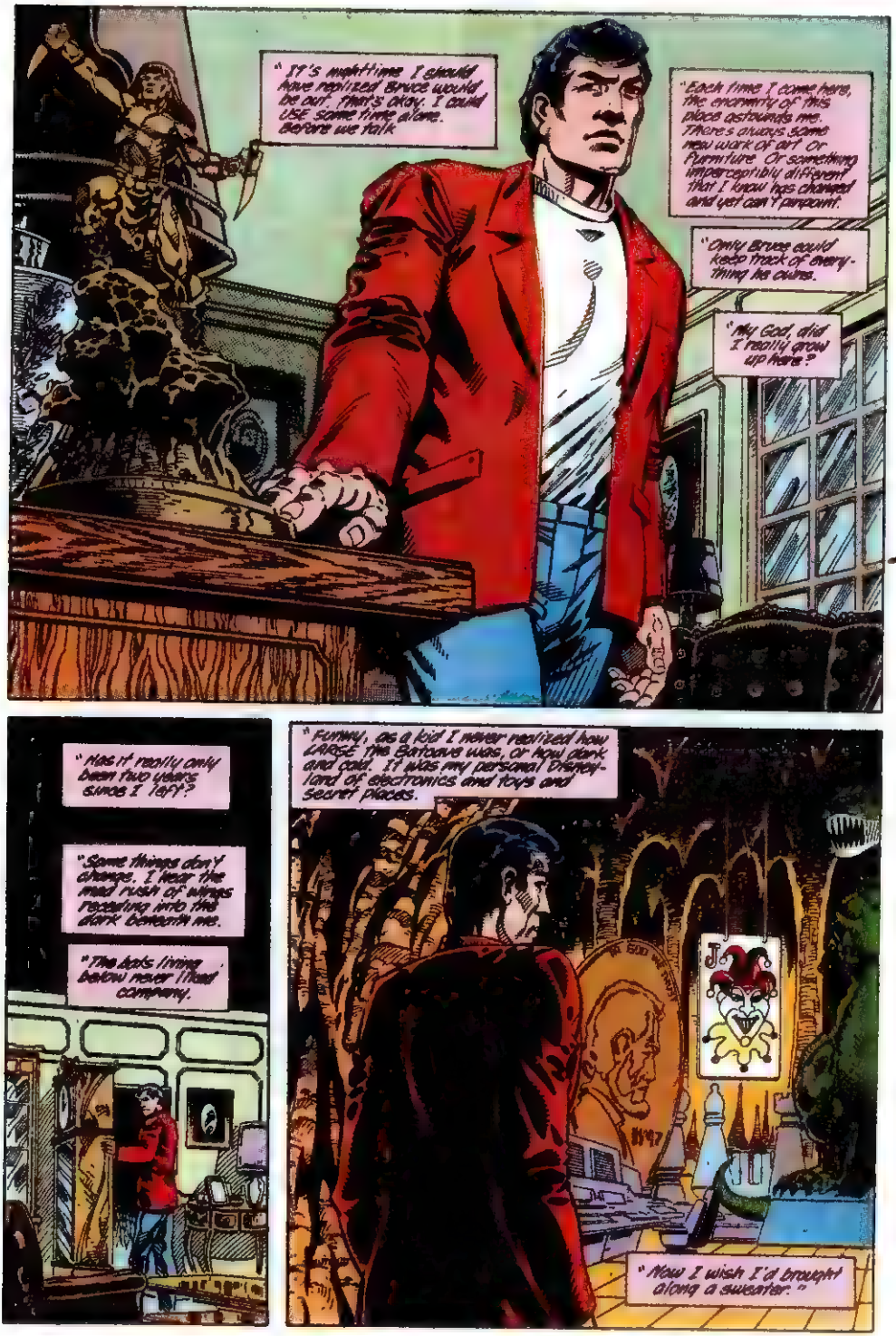
WE'VE HEARD HIS LITANY EVER SINCE MR. ZUCCO WAS FIRST ELIGIBLE FOR PAROLE.
WE ARE NOT QUESTIONING ANTHONY ZUCCO'S GUILT -- HE'S ALREADY SERVED TWELVE YEARS.

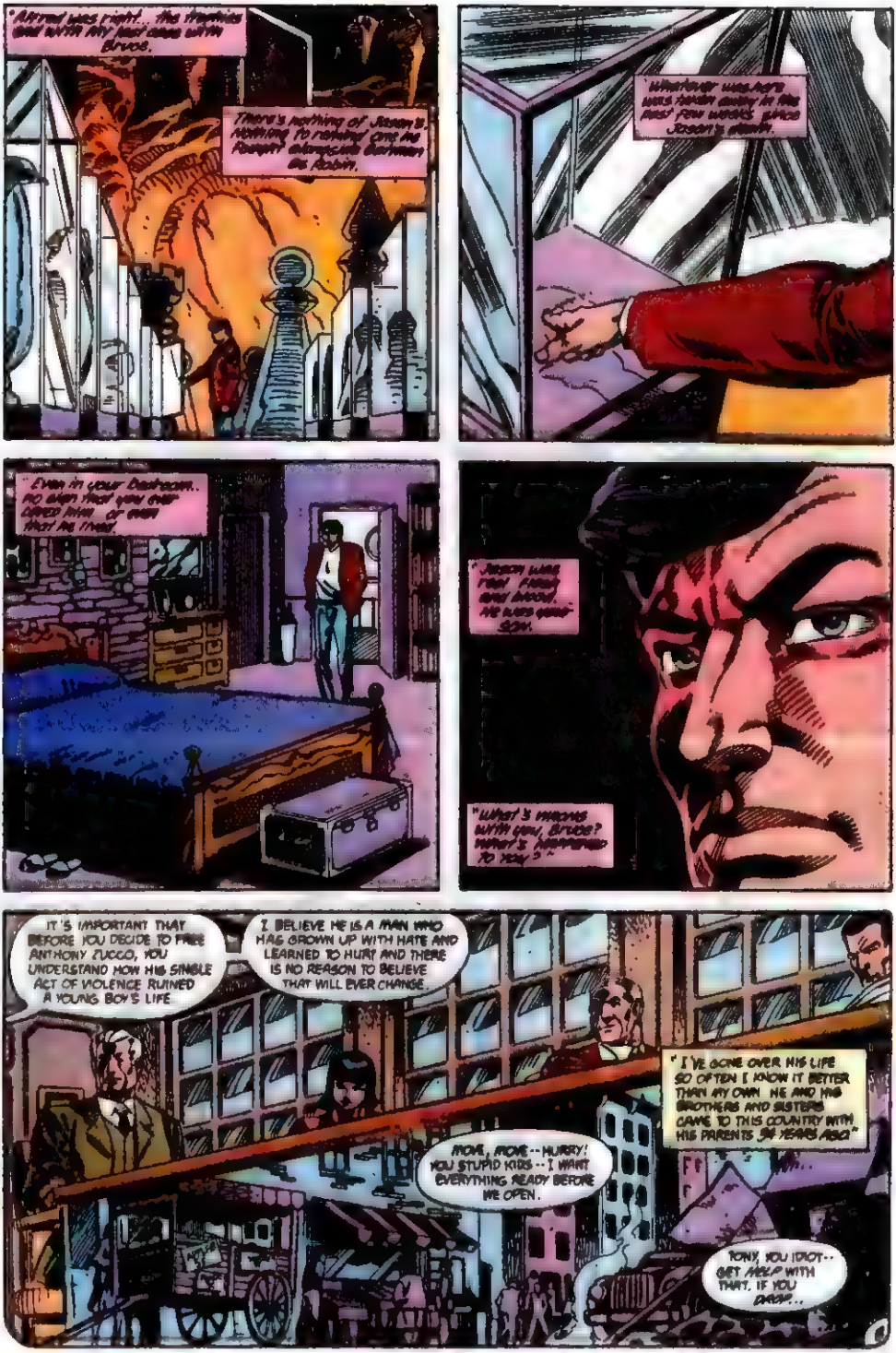
WHAT WE'RE ASKING IS -- HAS MR. ZUCCO PAID FOR HIS CRIMES? MOST OF US BELIEVE HE HAS.
MOST OF US BELIEVE HE WILL BE AN ASSET TO OUR COMMUNITY.

NICHOLAS, THIS IS A PAROLE HEARING. WE ARE OBLIGED TO HEAR DISSENTING VIEWS. I'M SORRY, NICK --
-- I KNOW YOU BELIEVE IN YOUR CAUSE, BUT AT LEAST LET US HEAR HIM OUT.
TO SOME, MURDER ISN'T EASILY FORGIVEN.

SIR, YOU MAY ENTER NOW.




"It's nighttime. I should have realized Bruce would be out. That's okay. I could use some time alone. Before we talk.
"Each time I come here, the enormity of this place astounds me. There's always some new work of art. Or furniture. Or something imperceptibly different that I know has changed and yet can't pinpoint.
"Only Bruce could keep track of everything he owns.
"My God, did I really grow up here?
"Has it really only been two years since I left?
"Some things don't change. I hear the mad rush of wings receding into the dark beneath me.
"The bats living below never mind company.
"Funny, as a kid I never realized how LARGE the Batcave was, or how dark and cold. It was my personal Disneyland of electronics and toys and secret places.
"Now I wish I'd brought along a sweater."


"Alfred was right... this business can't with my past come with Bruce.
There's nothing of Joseph's... nothing to remind me. He doesn't deserve to be torn by it.
Whatever was left was taken away in the first few hours since Joseph's death.
Even in your bedroom... no sign that you ever lived here... or even that he lived.
"Joseph was my friend and brother. He was your son.
"What's wrong with you, Bruce? What's happened to you?"
IT'S IMPORTANT THAT BEFORE YOU DECIDE TO FREE ANTHONY ZUCCO, YOU UNDERSTAND HOW HIS SINGLE ACT OF VIOLENCE RUINED A YOUNG BOY'S LIFE.
I BELIEVE HE IS A MAN WHO HAS GROWN UP WITH HATE AND LEARNED TO HURT AND THERE IS NO REASON TO BELIEVE THAT WILL EVER CHANGE.
"I'VE GONE OVER HIS LIFE SO OFTEN I KNOW IT BETTER THAN MY OWN. HE AND HIS BROTHERS AND SISTERS CAME TO THIS COUNTRY WITH HIS PARENTS 34 YEARS AGO."
MOVE, MOVE -- HURRY! YOU STUPID KIDS -- I WANT EVERYTHING READY BEFORE WE OPEN.
TONY, YOU IDIOT -- GET HELP WITH THAT. IF YOU DROP...

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HOW MANY TIMES DO I TELL YOU? HOW MANY TIMES DO YOU IGNORE ME?
HOW MANY TIMES DO I HAVE TO WHIP YOU?
CABBAGE
"HIS FATHER WAS A BULLY, THERE ARE ALWAYS STRONGER BULLIES. THAT IS THE FIRST LESSON ZUCCO LEARNED.
NEXT TIME YOU PAY UP, ZUCCO...
...OR IT WON'T BE YOUR WINDOW, AND IT WON'T BE YOUR LEG WE BREAK...
.. MAYBE IT'LL BE YOUR KIDS.. OR YOUR WIFE.
SO PAY, OR YOU WON'T LIKE SO MUCH WHAT WE BREAK NEXT
"BY THE TIME HIS FATHER WAS KILLED REFUSING TO GIVE MORE AND MORE MONEY, ZUCCO HAD LEARNED HIS LESSON."
"HIS FATHER AND MOTHER KILLED, THE OTHER CHILDREN WERE DIVIDED AMONG RELATIVES. BUT NOBODY WANTED ANTHONY: HE WAS THE OLDEST. HE WAS THE LEAST CONTROLLABLE.
"THE POLICE BROUGHT HIM TO ST. JUDE'S ORPHANAGE. TALK ABOUT LOST CAUSES.
"MARY ELIZABETH WAS A NOVICE NUN ASSIGNED TO ANTHONY ZUCCO SHE TALKED TO HIM, COUNSELED HIM, PRAYED FOR HIM.
"SHE THOUGHT SHE FAILED UNTIL SHE SAW HIM PRAYING."

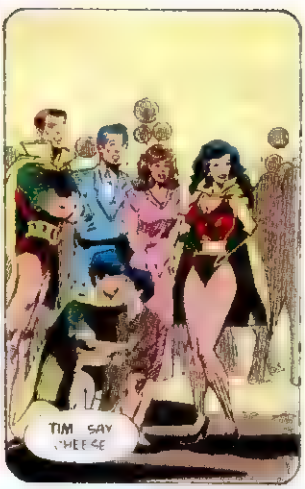
ANTHONY, I OFTEN COME HERE MYSELF, TO PRAY FOR PEACE AND TRANQUILITY.
YOU'VE BEEN SO TROUBLED YOU'VE BEEN FILLED WITH SO MUCH ANGER !! IS SO GOOD TO FIND YOU PRAYING--
YEAH, I'VE BEEN PRAYING... FOR THOSE GUYS -- THE ONES WHO KILLED MY PARENTS.
AND I'VE BEEN PRAYING THEY CURL UP AN' DIE
WILL THAT BRING YOUR PARENTS BACK TO YOU? WILL THAT MAKE THINGS BETTER?
NO, AND I DON'T CARE.
I JUST WANT TO SEE THEM DIE.
"AT THAT MOMENT EVEN SISTER MARY ELIZABETH KNEW THERE WAS NO HOPE
"TWO WEEKS LATER ZUCCO HAD DISAPPEARED FROM THE ORPHANAGE. SISTER MARY ELIZABETH FOUND AN ADDRESS SCRAWLED ON A PAPER IN HIS ROOM."
WHAT DID YOU COME HERE FOR? I DON'T NEED YOUR HELP. I DON'T NEED ANYBODY.
ESPECIALLY YOU!!
NO, ANTHONY -- PLEASE DON'T...
GET OUT OF MY LIFE!
ANTHONY!!!
"SISTER MARY ELIZABETH REACHED OUT WITH LOVE AND SUFFERED FOR IT. ANTHONY ZUCCO NEVER LOOKED BACK."
10

"NOBODY WAS GOING TO MAKE HIM LOOK WEAK. NOBODY WAS GOING TO MAKE HIM CRAWL..
"NOBODY WAS EVER AGAIN GOING TO MAKE HIM CRY.
"HE WAS BROUGHT INTO ONE OF THE MAJOR CRIME FAMILIES. YOUNG, AMBITIOUS, HE WANTED TO LEARN IT ALL...
"HE KEPT NOTES... WRITING DOWN EVERYTHING HE SAW AND HEARD IN HIS LEDGER. HE WAS GOING TO STUDY. HE WAS GOING TO LEARN EVERYTHING."
HEY, "BOOK," WHAT IT SAYS HERE -- YOU REALLY THINK I'M THAT GREAT, EH?
THE BEST, MR. SAMMS. I'M GOING TO BE JUST LIKE YOU.
YOU'RE CRAZY, "BOOK." YOU'RE GONNA GO FAR.
GENTLEMEN, THERE IS ABSOLUTELY NOTHING HERE THAT WE HAVEN'T HEARD BEFORE.
THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME, SIR. NOW, IF YOU DON'T MIND...
I DO MIND, VERY MUCH.
THIS ISN'T ABOUT ANTHONY ZUCCO -- IT'S ABOUT HIS VICTIMS.
NOT THE ONES HE KILLED... BUT THE ONE WHO LIVED.
THE BOY, RICHARD GARRISON. I WANT YOU TO THINK ABOUT HIM.

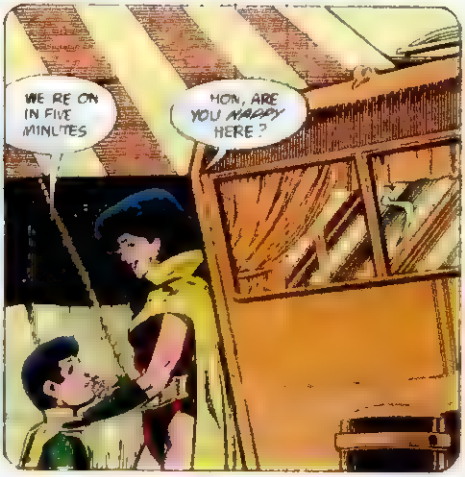
"IT WAS ALMOST TEN YEARS AGO WHEN RICHARD GRAYSON BECAME A VICTIM.
CIRCUS
"YOU DON'T THINK OF THE CIRCUS AS A PLACE FOR STABILITY OR FAMILY BUT IT IS."
DICK, TIP THOSE LEGS TO THE RIGHT. YOU'RE OFF CENTER.
AGAIN? I DON'T GET IT, MA WHY DO I KEEP LEANING LEFT?
HARRY? HOLD ON, MA-- MARRY?
HARRY, MOM AND DAD HAVE TO GO OVER SOME NEW ROUTINES AFTER THE SHOW YOU WANNA GO TO THE MOVIE?
MOVIE? AH, THE CINEMA! I LOVE--
--AHEM, RICHARD ARE YOU TRYING TO AVOID YOUR HOME-WORK AGAIN?
OH, YEAH.. THAT
TELL YOU WHAT, I SHALL HELP YOU WITH YOUR HISTORY AND MATH.
IF WE FINISH EARLY, PERHAPS A VISIT TO THE MOVIE PALACE WILL BE IN ORDER
YEAH!
AND HOW'S THE HANDSOMEST, YOUNGEST AND MOST ELIGIBLE YOUNG MAN IN HALY'S CIRCUS DOING TONIGHT?
AWWW C'MON, MARGIE LUTITOUT
YOU'RE THE ONLY ONE ELINORE ALLOWS TO FEED HER LIKE THAT I THINK SHE LOVES YOU, DICKIE
OH, NO-- NOT YOU, TOO, ELINORE!

DICK, I'VE GOT THOSE TICKETS FOR THE BASEBALL GAME MONDAY
YOU REALLY GOT 'EM? WOW! I CAN'T BELIEVE I'M ACTUALLY GOING TO THE WORLD SERIES
UHM, EXCUSE US FOR INTERRUPTING, BUT--

THIS IS TIMS FIRST TIME AT A CIRCUS, AND WE WERE WONDERING IF YOU'D LET US TAKE YOUR PHOTO WITH HIM?
OF COURSE... WE'D BE DELIGHTED


TIM SAY "CHEESE"

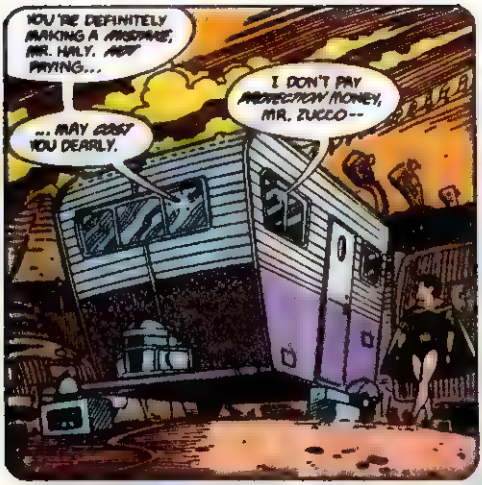
GENTLEMEN, AND LADIES-- THE VERY LAST PHOTO OF THE GRAYSON FAMILY TOGETHER
ONE LAST MOMENT OF HAPPINESS


WE'RE ON IN FIVE MINUTES
HON, ARE YOU HARLEY HERE?

WE'RE NOT LEAVING, ARE WE? I NEVER WANT TO LEAVE.
I KEEP THINKING WHAT IT WOULD BE LIKE TO STAY IN ONE PLACE LIKE A REAL FAMILY

YOUR GRANDFATHER RAN AWAY TO THE CIRCUS WHEN HE WAS NINE. I NEVER HAD A HOME OF MY OWN

OH, IGNORE ME, HONEY. A GIRL CAN'T KEEP FROM WONDERING CAN SHE?
I LOVE YOU TOO!
MA, I LOVE YOU TOO!

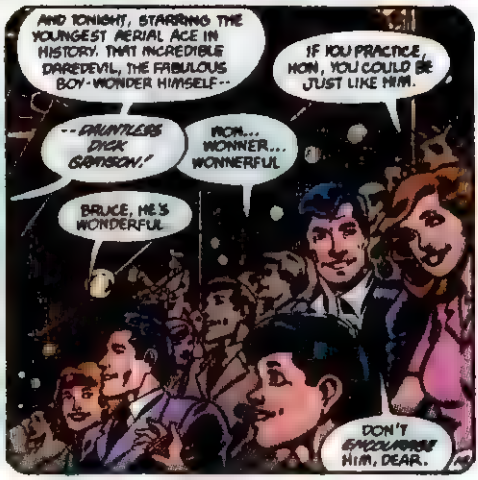

YOU'RE DEFINITELY MAKING A MISTAKE, MR. HALY. JUST PAYING...
... MAY COST YOU DEARLY.
I DON'T PAY PROTECTION MONEY, MR. ZUCCO--

--I NEVER HAVE. I NEVER WILL.
OH, BELIEVE ME, YOU WILL.

I'M HEADING HOME. YOU KNOW WHAT TO DO.
YEAH, DON'T WORRY.
WE KNOW... EXACTLY.

DAD, MOM-- YOU HAVE TO HEAR WHAT--
AFTER THE SHOW, DICK. WE'RE ON.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, CHILDREN OF ALL AGES--FOR YOUR ENTERTAINMENT AND AMUSEMENT, DOING THEIR DEATH-DEFYING ACT WITHOUT BENEFIT OF NET--
--THE AMAZING! THE STUPENDOUS! THE INCREDIBLE FLYING GRAYSONS!


AND TONIGHT, STARRING THE YOUNGEST AERIAL ACE IN HISTORY, THAT INCREDIBLE DAREDEVIL, THE FABULOUS BOY-WONDER HIMSELF--
--FEARLESS DICK GRAYSON!
IF YOU PRACTICE HON, YOU COULD BE JUST LIKE HIM.
MOM... WONNER... WONNERFUL
BRUCE, HE'S WONDERFUL
DON'T SMOTHER HIM, DEAR.

AND NOW, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN-- QUIET, PLEASE, AS YOUNG DICK GRAYSON ATTEMPTS THE INCREDIBLE, IMPOSSIBLE SWAPPABLE FLIP OF DOOM.
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AND NOW, MARY AND JOHN GRAYSON PROVE THEIR SON STILL HAS PLENTY TO LEARN AS THEY ATTEMPT TWO DOUBLE FLIPS-- DANGEROUSLY PASSING EACH OTHER IN MID-AIR FIFTY FEET HIGH!

IT'S AWFUL... JUST AWFUL.
TIMMY, DON'T LOOK.
THEY HURT... THEY HURT?
MOM..DAD! PLEASE... DON'T DIE--DON'T DIE!
I LOVE YOU... I LOVE YOU!
YOU CAN'T DIE... YOU CAN'T... YOU CAN'T!!
DICK, I-IT'S TOO LATE PLEASE... COME WITH ME.
EVERYONE, GET BACK TO YOUR PLACES... WE CAN'T LET THE AUDIENCE PANIC.
MOM, WE CAN'T STAY. LET'S GET HIM HOME.
LOOK! LOOK!
6

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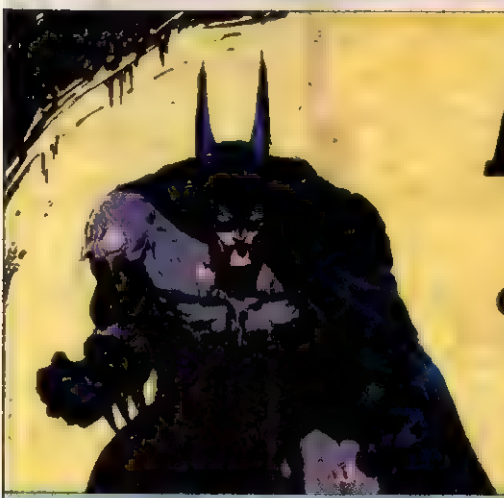

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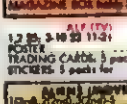

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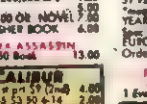

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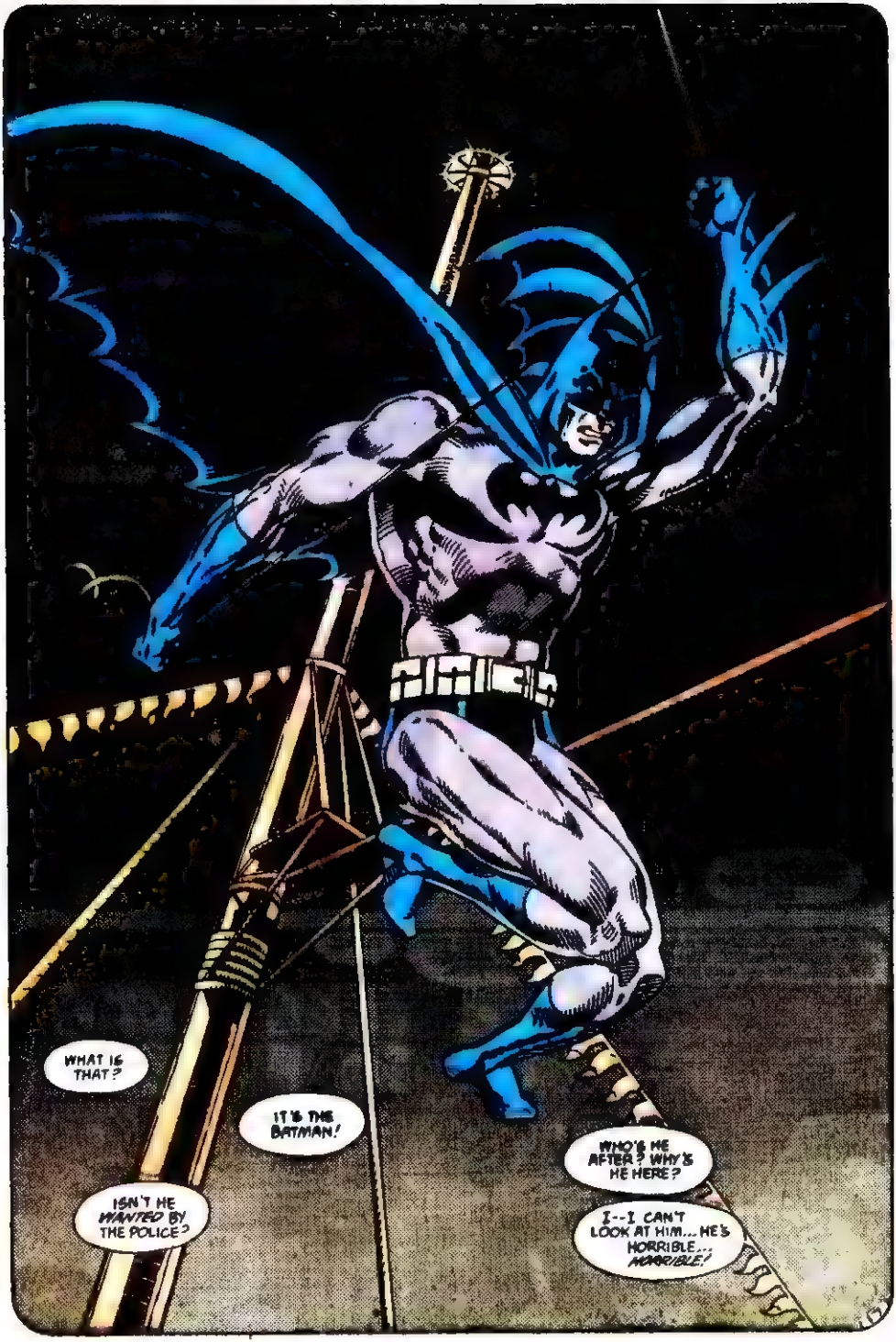
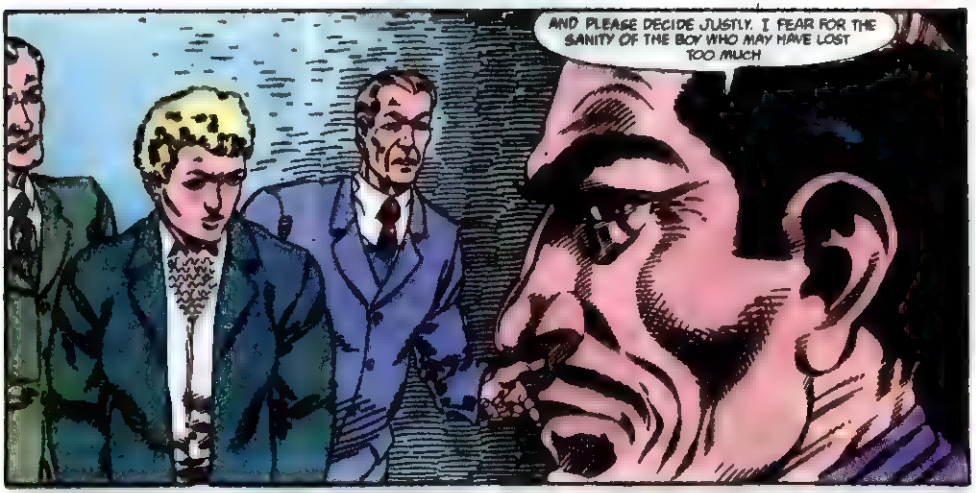
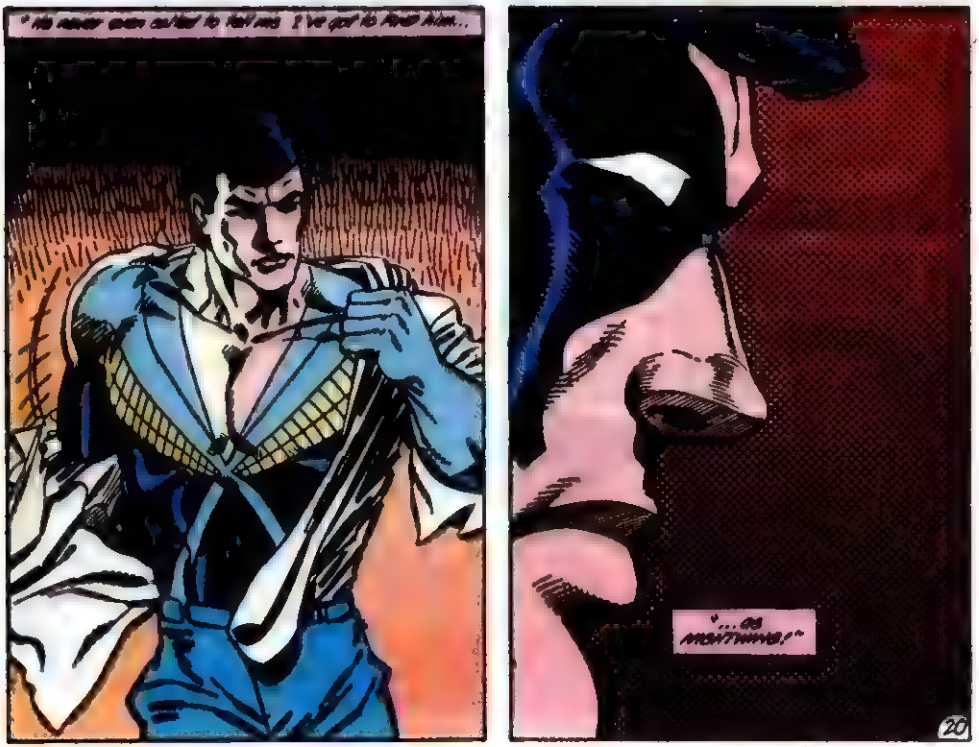

WHAT IS THAT?
IT'S THE BATMAN!
ISN'T HE WANTED BY THE POLICE?
WHO'S HE AFTER? WHY'S HE HERE?
I--I CAN'T LOOK AT HIM... HE'S HORRIBLE... HORRIBLE!

THE ROPE HOLDING THE TRAPEZE DIDN'T FRAY-- IT WAS DELIBERATELY CUT.
A MAN NAMED ZUCCO THREATENED MR. HALY. HE DID IT. HE KILLED MY PARENTS.
I WANT HIM... HE KILLED MY PARENTS!
I UNDERSTAND.
ZUCCO WON'T GET AWAY WITH IT.
I PROMISE YOU THAT
KILL HIM FOR ME. YOU'VE GOT TO KILL HIM.
SOMEONE CALL THE POLICE.
WE ALREADY DID. THEY'RE ON THEIR WAY.
BATMAN WAS ALREADY HERE?
HOW DOES HE DO IT?
IF BATMAN DOESN'T FIND ZUCCO-- I WILL...
I WANT HIM... I WANT HIM...
"TWO CHILDREN, BOTH SAW VIOLENCE, AND BOTH WANTED REVENGE. TWO CHILDREN. THE SAME, AND YET VERY DIFFERENT."
NO, I WANT TO STAY WITH MY FRIENDS. I LOVE THEM.
PLEASE.
I'M SORRY, SON, BUT STATE LAW WON'T PERMIT AN ITINERANT CIRCUS TO HARBOR A MINOR. I'M TRULY SORRY.
WE WILL LOVE YOU HERE AS THEY LOVED YOU. PLEASE... LET THIS BE YOUR HOME.

I WANT HIM... I WANT THE MAN WHO KILLED MY PARENTS.
WILL THAT BRING YOUR PARENTS BACK TO YOU? WILL THAT MAKE THINGS BETTER?
"TWO CHILDREN... THE SAME. AND YET VERY DIFFERENT..."
ZUCCO WAS BROUGHT UP WITH HATRED, AND THAT'S WHAT HE RETURNED TO THE WORLD. RICHARD GRAYSON WAS BROUGHT UP WITH LOVE --
--AND NOT EVEN ZUCCO'S ACT OF MURDER COULD CHANGE THAT.
ZUCCO'S ACT -- TWO DEATHS JUST FOR THE SAKE OF SOME MONEY, NEARLY CLAIMED A THIRD VICTIM...
...LET HIM FREE AND HOW MANY OTHERS WILL HE DESTROY?
I'VE COME TO YOU EACH YEAR SINCE HE'S BEEN ELIGIBLE FOR PAROLE, AND SHOWED YOU HOW THIS MAN HAS NOT REPENTED
NOTHING HAS CHANGED. PLEASE -- FOR THE SAKE OF HIS VICTIMS, PAST AND PRESENT... KEEP ANTHONY ZUCCO WHERE HE BELONGS.
THANK YOU, SIR. AND NOW WE HAVE TO DELIBERATE.
GOOD DAY.
19


AND PLEASE DECIDE JUSTLY. I FEAR FOR THE SANITY OF THE BOY WHO MAY HAVE LOST TOO MUCH

"When Alfred wrote and said he feared for Bruce's sanity, I thought he was exaggerating. Now I'm not so certain.
"...He refuses to acknowledge Jason's death.


"...He never even called to tell me. I've got to find him...
"...OR ANYTHING!"

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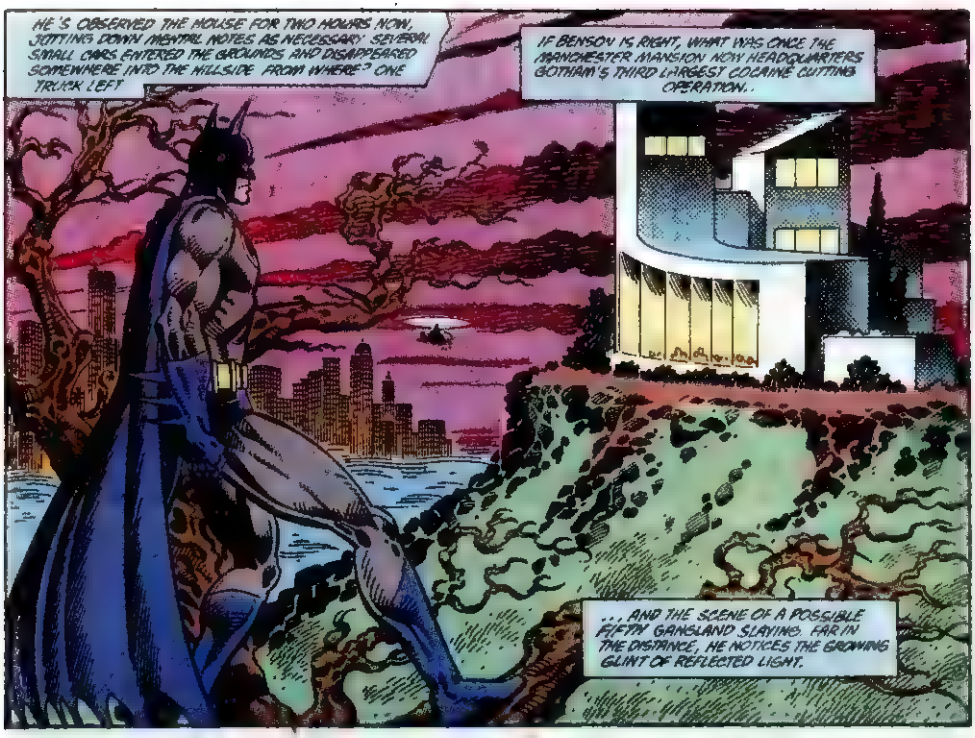
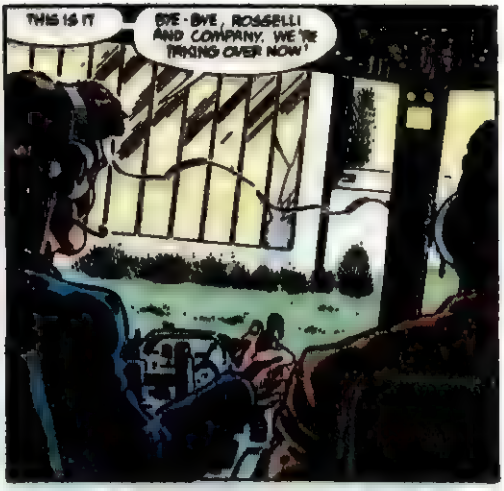

HE'S OBSERVED THE HOUSE FOR TWO HOURS NOW, JOTTING DOWN MENTAL NOTES AS NECESSARY. SEVERAL SMALL CARS ENTERED THE GROUNDS AND DISAPPEARED SOMEWHERE INTO THE HILLSIDE. FROM WHERE? ONE TRUCK LEFT.
IF BENSON IS RIGHT, WHAT WAS ONCE THE MANCHESTER MANSION NOW HEADQUARTERS GOTHAM'S THIRD LARGEST COCAINE CUTTING OPERATION..
...AND THE SCENE OF A POSSIBLE FIFTY GANGLAND SLAYING. FAR IN THE DISTANCE, HE NOTICES THE GROWING GLINT OF REFLECTED LIGHT.

YOU'RE GOING TO BE ATTACKED! CLEAR OUT--NOW!
GOOD GOD! BATMAN!
N-NOBODY EVER SAID WE'D HAVE TO DEAL WITH HIM!
WHERE'S MY GUN?

DIDN'T YOU HEAR ME?
WHOEVER'S BEHIND THE GANG MURDERS IS COMING HERE!
IS HE...LYIN'?
I DON'T KNOW, BUT I'M GETTIN' OUTTA HERE.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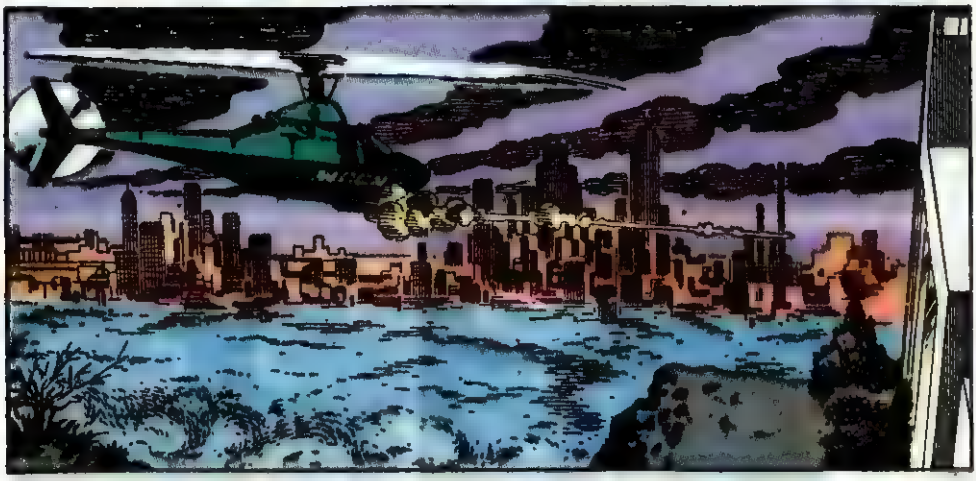

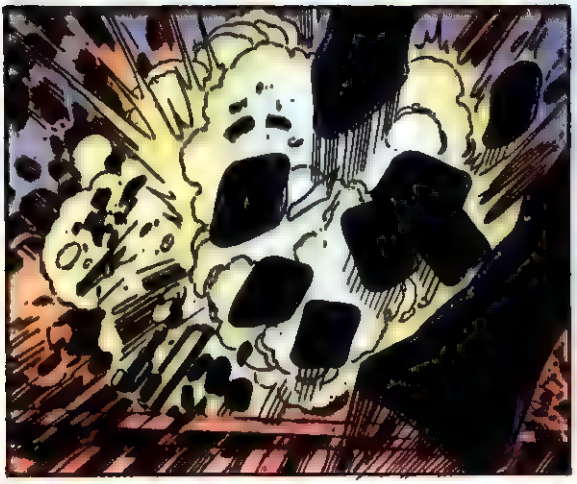

AH! NOTHING COULD'VE SURVIVED IN THERE -- NOTHING!
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L-3812

Dear Bat-Signals,

The new Batman continues to surprise and delight me! Chapter One of "The Many Deaths of the Batman" sure held my interest even though the story contained only two words. This issue reminded me of the old silent films (colorized versions) without subtitles and music. The reader is forced to look at Aparo's excellent illustrations for details, clues to see what is going on. (Hey, what the heck *is* going on?)

The expressions on the faces of significant characters say more of what they're feeling than dialogue could. Gordon's simple "Get out!" marks John Byrne as a man of few but significant words.

Great issue even though the Dark Knight was nowhere to be found. I hope Byrne gets over his writer's cramp! What's next—Byrne writes and Aparo takes a month off from drawing? Will the next issue have Batman screaming, *"I'm back!"* You already killed Robin. If you eliminate Batman then we're stuck with "The Adventures of Alfred, the *Lone Butler!*"

Keep up the good work.

Never speechless,
K. Roberts
Newton, MA

*****

Dear Batman,

Let me say that I consider issue #433 a silent classic. The tension was amazing. The rate at which I kept turning the pages was very high. The reactions of the various people were exactly what I would expect from them. Penguin's anger at being cheated out of killing Batman, Dick Grayson's sorrow, Alfred's shock, Gordon's disbelief, all were emotions that each would feel. No words besides Gordon's "Get out" are spoken, but the feelings expressed were more than any words could capture.

Another great story in an always great comic.

Joseph Olszewski
Philadelphia, PA

*****

Dear DC Comics:

BATMAN #433, "The Many Deaths of the Batman" Part One, was ... how to put it? In a word: confusing. I've heard of silent comedy. I've seen silent movies. But silent comics? Give us a break, guys.

And what's scarier, I loved it. I can't explain why, but it was one of the best comics of the year. Well, it wasn't all silent. Gordon told the cops to "get out" before he unmasked Batman.

In short, I'm impressed. You people responsible for the *Batman* comics ought to hear this message ... that there are people out there whom you are making very happy.

Michael A. Osazuwa
Mt. Rainier, MD

*****

Dear Bat-Signals,

I hadn't read a comic magazine for quite a while, until a friend recommended BATMAN #433 to me, and I am glad that he did. I found the story compelling and the artwork superb. You really invited this reader in, making me feel like I was a part of the story by letting me use my own dialogue and emotions as the story unfolded. Commissioner Gordon's "Get out" were two of the most powerful words I've read in a long time. I read the issue four times, and I enjoyed it more each time I read it.

My congratulations and thanks to all involved. You've re-enlisted this former "former comics reader." Keep up the great work.

Sincerely,
Paul T. Smith
Brooklyn, NY

We plan to try.

*****

Bat-fellows,

It's a cliché: "A picture is worth a thousand words..." but it applies. It is stunning. I never thought a comic book story could be so well told on purely a graphic basis. I feel that this Batman series will surely become one of the classics. I believe you've outdone yourself this time. I was glad to see a glimpse of Dick Grayson. I'd just like to see more, and also the return of Silver St. Cloud.

Just when I thought *Batman* couldn't get any better ...this storyline comes along. Keep at it.

"Patch" Morgan
Atlanta, GA

*****

Dear Editor,

.....I HATE SILENT STORIES.....

Sam Quang
Toronto, Ontario

We don't.

Actually, several readers alluded to having tried to come up with a clever letter in two words in response to Part One of "The Many Deaths of the Batman." Sam came closest.

*****

Dear Denny, John, Jim, and Mike,

DC has proven to be a trailblazer in comics, as far as innovation is concerned, ever since the invention of original comic book publication in the 1930's. Now DC takes yet another step forward with BATMAN #433.

Though "Period of Mourning" contained only two words, it was action and expression that truly carried the story. You could see both anger and sadness in Dick Grayson, glee in Harvey (Two-Face) Dent over the supposed death of Batman, disappointment in the Penguin upon learning that his lifelong dream had been squashed (sort of), and Alfred's total shock upon finding out that Bruce Wayne, the real Batman, is nowhere to be found. One wonders how "Period of Mourning" would fare with dialogue. It would still be a masterpiece. John Byrne, however, is to be praised for doing something daring in comics—his past work on *Fantastic Four, X-Men,* and *Superman* is proof enough that he's one of comicdom's best—and though it isn't the first time that anyone has tried this in comics, it's sure to set new standards in storytelling. I'm looking forward to the rest of "The Many Deaths of the Batman," including "whodunit."

I'm also looking forward to *Batman: Year Three* by Wolfman and Broderick, the forthcoming World's Finest miniseries by Gibbons and Rude and, of course, the summer's Batman film.

John Lavernoich
Winsted, CT

That about covers it, do you think? Just wait and you might find some more neat stuff spewing out our doors. Keep an eye out.

*****

Dear Denny and Dan,

I was attempting to come up with a two-word letter to describe your two-word issue of *Batman,* but I couldn't. It was one of the most moving issues I've ever "read." Jim Aparo did a fantastic job of conveying the emotions through his artwork. Alfred's response to the newspaper story (page 17) was drawn perfectly. The entire creative team deserves a round of applause!

The whole *Batman* line keeps outdoing itself. This is definitely Batman's year. Keep up the great work.

Sincerely,
Terry Waltermire
Findlay, OH

* * * * *

Dear DC:

I am writing to you in response to the printing of my letter in BATMAN #433. Though I may have been a little harsh, your response was both mature and responsible. You have proven to me that you have guts and treat the reader in an intelligent fashion.

I must admit that after I mailed my letter I gave stronger thought to a different perspective about Batman's actions. I think you are right: Batman does not cross that last line nor should he. He must show himself as an example to the people and make sure he keeps their trust. But if Batman does not cross that line, why did he want to kill the Joker after Robin's death? Does he still feel that way?

I'm sorry if I offended you, Dan Raspler, or you, Mr. Denny O'Neil. I didn't intend to, but I needed to let you know how I felt.

Keep cool,
John O'Fletcher
Rochester, NY

Probably Batman does not feel that way any longer. Wounds heal and scar over, and Batman is human.

* * * * *

Dear Bats:

While the story was powerful stuff, I noticed something after Gordon lifted the cowl and saw that stranger's face: the Bat-Signal was on. That means Gordon KNOWS! He knows Batman is Bruce Wayne. I always figured Gordon knew at the end of Miller's *Year One*; this clinches it for me.

See you at the movies.

Paul Wartenberg
Gainesville, FL

So you know he knows? We don't know he knows.

* * * * *

Dear Editor:

As a reader of *Batman* for twenty years, I feel compelled to make an observation and offer an opinion.

The observation is that inconsistent characterization of Batman has followed economic and social cycles. The shadowy figure of the late 1930's and early 1940's coincided with the trauma of World War II. The Dark Knight gave way to the square-jawed, more upbeat rendition of the 1950's and 1960's when the economy was booming and America was on top of the world. This was also the time of Robin's greatest prominence, and the period ended with Batman's popularity at a high following the television series.

During the gloomy stagflation of the 1970's Batman returned to his roots as Robin got shuffled off to college. The Reagan 1980's and the bull market brought a return of the Rogues Gallery and a new incarnation of the Boy Wonder along with a slightly less serious Batman. The stock market crash foretold the demise of Robin. The return of Batman to his lonesome, grim ways may lead us into the next recession. A strange correlation, perhaps, but literature is usually reflective of the times.

Now my opinion. Batman has shifted too far toward the grim reaper side of his character. I may be in the minority, but I prefer the Batman of the 1950/60's. I like seeing Batman operate during daylight hours. The stories were more entertaining and the Batman family better represented. Today's Batman is clearly more sophisticated but duller. A happy medium should be possible.

...which takes me to the heart of the matter: Robin. Most of the world thinks of Batman and Robin as inseparable, yet the creators of the comics can't make the two concepts compatible. It does seem inconsistent to have Batman the avenger trailed by a teenager in bright red and yellow. But from Robin's inception until his departure in the early 1970's the team was a tremendous success, inspiring many copies.

So what of the present rendition of Batman? When Batman becomes a crazed loner, the entire supporting cast suffers. Is there no room for a lighter side in a man driven to fight crime because of the murder of his parents?

His 50th anniversary presents the perfect opportunity to integrate the various "Batmans ("Batmen"?) and recommit to the supporting cast and a well-balanced, consistently written hero.

Steven Milunovich
New York, NY

Thanks for the month's most thoughtful letter.

* * * * *

Dear Denny,

I love *Batman* comics, but why did you kill Robin? I liked Jason a lot. I got all his comics. I found out in a magazine that Robin was going to die. I miss him. But why did you kill him?

Eric Martinson
Valrico, FL

* * * * *

Dear Bat-People,

Hello from a new *Batman* collector! I've been collecting comics for about eleven years and I'll admit that until "A Death in the Family" and "Blind Justice" I've been a devout X-Men fan, but because of the intense writing going on in Batman's comics I've really rethought that. I've begun to dig in the shops for back issues.

For the past two years or so, DC has been the best in terms of stories, thanks to people like Jim Starlin, George Perez, John Byrne, Sam Hamm, and both the Kessels. I've lately realized something: Batman is the sole survivor of the Bat-family.

Sure, there's Dick Grayson, but he's Nightwing and his place is in New York with the Titans. Robin is dead. Batgirl is crippled. Earth-Two's Huntress and Robin are gone and ... where is Man-Bat? Who defends Gotham when the Dark Knight is out or hurt? Batman can't possibly handle it alone. So I hope a new Bat-person will be winging through Gotham soon.

Thanks for reading this, and until further notice...

MAKE MINE BATMAN!!!

Sincerely,
Robert Bulanadi
Carson, CA

From the Den

Got home at six knowing I had to write this column and not having an idea in my head. Zero. Zilch. *Nada*. Mind emptier than Old Mother Hubbard's cupboard.

Well, clearly some help was in order. I started out for the video rental store. Get me something really inspirational—a Lash LaRue western, or a Charlie Chan flick, or maybe an early Chuck Norris; Chuck's spinning back-kick always stimulates creativity. On my way out the door, I patted my pocket as I always do to make certain my wallet was where it should be.

It wasn't.

An hour later, we'd exhausted all the possibilities. The thing was gone, probably to a subway pickpocket. No video rentals tonight. My rental card was in the wallet and—

The awful truth hit me like a Norris left hook. My video rental card was the least of my losses. I was also bereft of my American Express, bank, telephone credit, insurance and Writers Guild cards. And my company ID. And my driver's license. (Also some archaic, outmoded money, but that was not too bothersome.) Everything that allows me to function as a responsible American citizen was in the possession of some grubby thief. If I had to, I could not prove that I am me. Somehow, without realizing it, over the years I had yielded up my identity to a series of binary codes and magnetic strips and now they were gone. In a world run by microchips and computers, I do not exist.

Which has, I think, just one advantage. Non-existent people do not have to write columns.

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